Shalikashvili blasts new HIV policy

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Discharging military service members with the AIDS virus is unfair and wastes money spent on training, Gen. John Shalikashvili told lawmakers Tuesday.

Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee at a defense budget hearing, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff denounced the newly enacted law that forces out service members who test positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

"I think it is, in a number of cases, wasteful because we do have individuals who are in their middle ranks in whom we have invested some training, and they have considerable experience and so they continue to contribute," he said.

Under a provision written into this year's defense-authorization bill by Rep. Robert Dornan, R-Calif., 1,049 service members with the AIDS virus would be discharged within five months. President Clinton opposed the provision but signed the bill because he said he favored other aspects of the defense bill.

Dornan argued that AIDS virus carriers are deemed "nondeployable" by the military, meaning they cannot be sent overseas or into battle.

Shalikashvili noted there are about 6,500 others in the military who cannot be deployed because of various ailments such as heart disease.

Shalikashvili was responding to questions from Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., who is cosponsoring bipartisan legislation to repeal the Dornan provision.

The repeal measure has 40 cosponsors in the Senate. A companion bill in the House has 127 co-sponsors, said Kim Mills of the Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights organization working against the HIV provision.

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Seada Omerovic heads for a refugee camp Tuesday with her son Amel. The Bosnian Muslims from Srebrenica are among those on the move as Bosnia is reshaped. Bosnian Serbs continued to leave Sarajevo suburbs Tuesday rather than be governed by former foes.

zici's case, there were to be 50 Muslims, 15 Serbs and five Croats.

Fitzgerald said that while the Kiseljak police were not armed and appeared to be only making a point, "there is some concern that they might not leave."

The situation further escalated tensions between Croats and Muslims in the federation, the counterweight to the Bosnian Serb republic in divided Bosnia.

Earlier, spokesmen for the peacekeeping force said the NATO-led troops would step up their presence in Sarajevo's Serbian suburbs to keep fleeing residents from wrecking utilities.

The handover of Serbian districts to the Muslim-Croat federation, mandated under the U.S.-brokered peace plan, began last month and is due to be completed March 19. Fearing reprisals for the 3½-year Serbian siege of government-held sectors of Sarajevo, tens of thousands of Serbs have been departing.

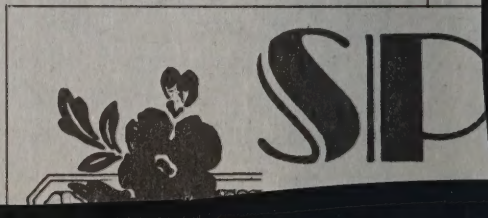
In Prague, the Czech Defense Ministry did not dispute that two of its soldiers had sex with the woman but said in a statement that she "was not forced into sexual intercourse. The men did not resort to violence, "threat of violence or . . . abuse of her helplessness," it said.

However, a U.S. Army spokeswoman in Taszar, Capt. Leela Dawson-Hamm, insisted that the woman had been raped in central Bosnia, an area where Czech soldiers are posted.

Defense Secretary William Perry said it was "not only a matter of finding the perpetrators of that act but of taking proper care of the victim."

The woman was evacuated Sunday to the 67th Combat Support Hospital at Taszar, a southwestern Hungarian town where the Americans have set up a supply and logistics base. There she was "being provided with every medical and legal effort

extending tax breaks for troops

benefits usually given during wartime. Senate passage is expected later this week.

are in Bosnia, Croatia and Macedonia. For officers, the excluded earnings would be capped at an amount equal to the highest en-